

FOREIGN CRUISE OPERATORS FIGHTING FOR CHINESE MARKET



The Chinese market is the world's second largest cruise market after the United States. The number of cruise passengers has been increasing by 76% every year for about four years. In 2016 the new record tally was 2.1 million passengers. Moreover, China's 11 biggest ports are home to 927 cruise ships. This is a 72% increase compared to last year.

It is a market that is constantly growing and has enormous room for potential. As a result, cruise operators are doing everything possible to enter this market and offer their services in China.

Increasing Efforts to Break Through

American cruise company Carnival Corporation & plc, the world's biggest leisure travel company, has launched a project in China. The project will be operated by Costa Cruises, one of the companies owned by Carnival Corporation. The plan is to build a cruise ship named "Costa Venezia" for China.

Costa Venezia is expected to make its opening voyage in 2019 from the Italian city of Trieste and will follow the path of Marco Polo on its way to Shanghai. It will be built by Italian shipbuilding company Fincantieri. Costa Cruises is the leader of the Chinese market. Since entering the market in 2006, it has offered its services to more than 2 million people in China.

Another cruise operator, the Swiss company Viking Cruises introduced its product to China in 2016. The company offered tailor-made cruises on the Rhine and Danube for its customers. Not long ago they also opened their office in Shanghai, which is a clear indication that this market is one of Viking Cruises' top priorities for the coming years.

Cruise Operators Build New Ships

Meanwhile, other cruise operators are also attempting to contribute to the Chinese market. At the end of October, shipbuilding company Meyer Werft finished the construction of the World Dream for the Dream Cruises company. This was this year's third cruise ship dedicated to China and its market. Other significant additions have been the Norwegian Joy for the Norwegian Cruise Line or the Majestic Princess for Princess Cruises.

Cruise companies have also been attempting to adapt their services so that they suit specific needs. An example of that is the Royal Caribbean Cruises. The company has launched two new ships - Quantum of the Seas and Ovation of the Seas. Both ships feature bumper cars or a skydiving simulator, as well as an observation pod. The World Dream, for example, has a small submarine on board. Some Chinese needs have been met with the addition of "shopping centers" or karaoke rooms or gaming areas, specifically on the Majestic Princess.

According to estimates, China could reach a tally of 7 to 10 million passengers by 2030. If this is to be believed, the Asian country could be a serious contender for the United States on the cruise market in the foreseeable future.

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